

Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Question about UCSD communicating with VA  
From: "Butler, Cynthia C." <Cynthia.Butler@va.gov>  
Date: 4/12/19, 3:16 PM  
To: Brad Racino <bradracino@inewssource.org>

Here is our response:

*For questions about University of California San Diego activities, we refer you to UCSD for comment.*

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**From:** Brad Racino <bradracino@inewssource.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2019 3:29 PM  
**To:** Butler, Cynthia C. <Cynthia.Butler@va.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Question about UCSD communicating with VA

Cynthia,

I have a bit more information to share about the researcher-physician we are writing about, Dr. Kang Zhang.

UCSD said he was suspended indefinitely from serving as a PI on any UCSD IRB in April 2017 and is not permitted to supervise IRB-approved activities. He is however not suspended from serving as a PI on any federal grant.

You told me the VA was not notified of either the FDA warning letter or UCSD audit that prompted this suspension. I'm worried I used the wrong language in my question ("notified") and should have asked if the VA was previously aware of any of the things I'm including in this email?

Also, if someone is willing to provide me with a statement, I'd really like to know what the VA thinks about this, and whether Dr. Zhang is active in consenting patients or proposing any new trials at the VA.

Thank you as always.

-Brad

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[Butler, Cynthia C.](#)

March 29, 2019 at 3:44 PM

No, VA was not notified

Thanks,

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**From:** Brad Racino <[bradracino@inewssource.org](mailto:bradracino@inewssource.org)>

**Sent:** Friday, March 29, 2019 1:57 PM

**To:** Butler, Cynthia C. <[Cynthia.Butler@va.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Butler@va.gov)>

**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Question about UCSD communicating with VA

Cynthia — I'm asking if the VA received notification about the violations. I'm not asking about the study.

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 29, 2019, at 1:41 PM, Butler, Cynthia C. <[Cynthia.Butler@va.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Butler@va.gov)> wrote:

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[Brad Racino](#)

March 29, 2019 at 1:56 PM

Cynthia — I'm asking if the VA received notification about the violations. I'm not asking about the study.

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 29, 2019, at 1:41 PM, Butler, Cynthia C. <[Cynthia.Butler@va.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Butler@va.gov)> wrote:

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[Butler, Cynthia C.](#)

March 29, 2019 at 1:41 PM

Hello Brad – Here is the VASDHS response:

The study you reference was conducted by the University of California San Diego, and we refer you to UCSD for comment.

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**From:** Brad Racino <[bradracino@inewsource.org](mailto:bradracino@inewsource.org)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 27, 2019 10:15 AM

**To:** Butler, Cynthia C. <[Cynthia.Butler@va.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Butler@va.gov)>

**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Question about UCSD communicating with VA

Thank you Cindy. A follow-up question to please include as well -- if the VA was made aware, did they take any action regarding Zhang's ongoing research at the VA at the time?

Apologies for forgetting to include that in my last email.

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**BRAD RACINO** | Senior Reporter & Assistant Director

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[Brad Racino](#)

March 27, 2019 at 10:15 AM

Thank you Cindy. A follow-up question to please include as well -- if the VA was made aware, did they take any action regarding Zhang's ongoing research at the VA at the time?

Apologies for forgetting to include that in my last email.

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[Butler, Cynthia C.](#)

March 27, 2019 at 8:44 AM

Hello Brad – Looking into your request now.

Thanks,

**Cindy C. Butler, RD, MBA, APR**

Public Affairs Director | VA San Diego Healthcare System

Office: (858) 552-4373 | [Cynthia.butler@va.gov](mailto:Cynthia.butler@va.gov)

[www. Sandiego.va.gov](http://www.Sandiego.va.gov)

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**From:** Brad Racino [<bradracino@inewssource.org>](mailto:bradracino@inewssource.org)

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 26, 2019 5:47 PM

**To:** Butler, Cynthia C. [<Cynthia.Butler@va.gov>](mailto:Cynthia.Butler@va.gov)

**Cc:** Jill Castellano [<jillcastellano@inewssource.org>](mailto:jillcastellano@inewssource.org)

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Question about UCSD communicating with VA

Good evening Cindy,

Would you please check and let me know if the VA was ever made aware of an [FDA Warning Letter](#) and/or [UCSD audit](#) that found several protocol violations related to Dr. Kang Zhang, a professor at UCSD who had a study from 2014-2017 at the VA titled, "HTRA1 and Age-Related Macular Degeneration"?

We are trying to understand how and when different research institutions communicate with each other regarding this type of thing.

I have a Friday afternoon deadline and would greatly appreciate a response before then. Thank you for your help and please let me know if I can help

clarify in any way.

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**BRAD RACINO** | Senior Reporter & Assistant Director

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